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Statement of Rep. Brad Miller on GOP Balanced Budget Amendment

*Cuts Medicare and Social Security; Puts More of a Burden on Working Families and Veterans;
and Destroys Jobs*

Washington, D.C. – I voted "No" today on the Republican Amendment that would pose serious risks to the economy and would cut essential programs such as Medicare and Social Security. I support a balanced budget in ordinary times, and I'm proud of my votes against the Bush tax cuts that exploded the deficit.

But, now this amendment would force the government to raise taxes and cut spending in a tough economy. Nonpartisan economists with Macroeconomic Advisers LLC estimate that 15 million jobs would be lost and the unemployment rate would skyrocket to 17 percent. In addition, they predict the proposal would harm seniors with a possible \$750 billion in Medicare cuts and \$1.2 trillion in cuts to Social Security. Veterans' benefits could be cut by \$85 billion through 2021.

The Constitution gives Congress the power to do its job, and that's what we need to do. We should make the hard decisions it will take to rein in the budget deficit. We do not need a PR gimmick, which is all this amendment is, to tell us that we need to do our jobs, and to tie our hands if our country faces a crisis in the future.

This amendment could undermine our military by requiring Congress to set a specific limit on funding for a military operation that creates a deficit.

In addition, the amendment makes no provision for emergencies such as a large scale natural disaster. Should a large scale catastrophe or attack occur making it impossible for 3/5 of Members to be present, Congress would not have the ability to respond if it meant extra expenditures.

Finally, a balanced-budget amendment could also open the door to courts intervening in federal budget decisions. By writing a budget requirement into the Constitution, budget disputes become constitutional questions and the courts would become involved in budget controversies. The Founding Fathers purposefully closed the door on the courts making major budget decisions to prevent lawsuits from anyone with a grudge against Congressional decisions.

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